

The Toddler Program At Montessori Learning Center A Guide For Parents



Welcome to the Toddler Program at MLC

Thank you for choosing the Toddler Program at Montessori Learning Center in beautiful Asheville, NC. The teaching team at MLC consists of dedicated professionals committed to providing your child with the best possible early childhood experience. Please take time to read through our Toddler Program Guide and become familiar with the Montessori teaching method as it pertains to our youngest members of the community.

The Montessori Method

The Montessori method of education was begun by Dr. Maria Montessori in Italy, at the turn of the century. The educational process builds confidence and develops self-discipline, and the Montessori classroom cultivates a child's natural curiosity, fosters independence even at a very young age, and so enhances each child's desire to learn. Children are free to move about the classroom, and choose work independently. The classroom is a specially prepared environment, and the teacher is a guide and an observer. Materials are displayed in an aesthetically pleasing, orderly manner, which naturally attracts the child to do the work.

In the toddler environment, special care is taken to create a sense of order. Montessori described the very young toddler as having an "Unconscious Absorbent Mind" and explained that the child learns through all of the senses and every experience helps further development. Specially created materials and activities are available to foster development in language, motor skills, social/emotional growth and cognitive development. Maintaining order in the environment allows the toddler to experience as much as possible independently. The goal of the classroom is to become the children's workplace and to be navigated successfully by very young children so that they can "learn by doing." Everything in the environment is carefully prepared with the child's success in mind.

Nutrition in the Classroom

Families are responsible for packing a morning snack and a lunch each day for their child. In keeping with NC guidelines, the lunch must contain five portions:

- One Protein- meat, cheese, egg, peanut butter, beans, etc.
- One Grain- bread, pasta, rice, tortilla, cracker, etc.
- One Fruit- preferably fresh (or second helping of vegetable)
- One Vegetable- preferably fresh (or second helping of fruit)
- One serving fluid milk (soy, rice, or other alternative to dairy is ok)

Morning Snack should be separately labeled and fit into a single reusable container, and placed in the snack bucket each morning. (If enrolled in any After Care Programs, please pack another separately labeled p.m. snack)

Lunch: The Toddler Program considers the lunch and snacks provided to be an extension of our practical life curriculum. In keeping with our philosophy of setting up the toddlers for success, we ask that each food item be sent in reusable, resealable containers (such as Tupperware) and sent fully prepared and ready for consumption. This allows the children to work toward the independence of serving their own food, and completing the cycle of activity by reclosing and repacking the lunchbox. Plastic baggies, foil or other disposable containers are not successful for toddlers. Additionally, reusable containers help reduce waste and promote environmental awareness.

NO-NOs: Commercially packaged items such as "Lunchables", Go-Gurts, juice boxes, fruit cups, individually wrapped string cheese, fruit snacks, flavored milk, or any prepackaged, high sugar or high salt items are not acceptable in the Toddler Classroom for two reasons: nutritional requirements and ecology awareness. Our goal is to work with families to provide a high standard of nutrition for children and to promote healthy eating habits.

Treats: Some families have a tradition of sending a “treat” in the child’s lunchbox. One basic principle of early childhood nutrition education is that food should never be used as a punishment or reward, and a “treat” should not mean everyday. Consider non-food treat options, such as an “I love you” note, a new cloth napkin, or a family photo, or waiting until the car ride home from school to indulge in a sweet treat.

Wellness Policy

The daily program is designed for well children, and if illness prevents a child from comfortably participating in the day’s program at MLC, the child should be kept home. As a community, we all work hard to keep illness out of the Toddler environment and prevent the spread of communicable illness. Parents are asked to keep their children home when the following situations exist:

- If the child has a fever of 100.5 within the past 24 hours without medication
 - If the child has had any vomiting or diarrhea in the past 24 hours
 - If the child has heavy nasal discharge
 - If the child has a constant cough or severe sore throat
 - If the child shows uncharacteristic signs of oncoming illness such as being overly fussy, tired, or generally not him/herself
 - If the child is taking medication which prevents full participation in the school day
- We appreciate the support and cooperation in keeping us all healthy within the community.

Toilet Learning

An exciting developmental milestone for toddlers is learning to use the toilet independently. The toddler teaching team will work closely with families to ensure a level of consistency between home and school during this process and uses the following as guidance for determining a child’s readiness for Toilet Learning:

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| 1. Regular bowel movements | 4. Commenting when wet or having had a bowel movement |
| 2. Knowingly pausing to have bowel movements or urinate | 5. Showing interest in sitting on the toilet and wearing underwear |
| 3. Waking up dry from napping | |

When these signs of readiness are observed both at home and at school, and parents and teachers have agreed that the child is ready to proceed, the process of toilet learning can begin. During this process, expect accidents! Accidents are a normal part of learning, and encourage the child to change his/her own clothing. Be relaxed and understanding. Praise all success, yet allow the child to take ownership over the process and be proud of his/her accomplishments.

- Give diapers away to a younger child. Make this a big deal, let your child do the giving
- Make a special trip to the store to buy underwear, and let your child choose
- Establish a toileting routine, and determine when it is simply a reminder and when it is not a choice (before a car trip, at bedtime, etc)
- Remain calm about accidents and praise successes
- Teach the child to wipe themselves appropriately and to practice handwashing after each trip to the toilet

Please be sure to keep your child stocked with changes of clothes at school, including 4-5 loose fitting underwear, 4-5 pull on elastic waistband pants, and 4 changes of socks. Long dresses, complicated closures, overalls, or “onesies” hinder the child’s independence.

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Daily Routine

The Toddler Program runs from 8:30-2:30 daily. Before school care begins at 7:30-8:20, and after care is from 2:30-4:30.

Daily Schedule

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| 8:30-10:15 Morning work period, free choice of work, individual lessons and self serve snack | |
| *Diaper checks/Toilet reminders throughout | |
| 10:15-10:30 Circle Time | 12:00-1:50 Half Day Pick up and Full Day Naptime |
| 10:30-11:30 Outdoor Time | Diaper checks/Toilet reminders |
| 11:30-11:55 Lunch | 2:00-2:30 Outdoor time |
| *Diaper checks/Toilet reminders | |

Arrival: We ask that toddlers be at school no later than 9:00am each morning. This allows them to complete the arrival/goodbye routine, and settle in to the morning work period. Late arrivals disrupt children who have already settled in to a morning of activities, and make it difficult for the entire classroom to regain focus.

Establishing a goodbye routine with your child is important. Assist in putting away belongings, morning handwashing, and putting on indoor slippers only as needed. Remember that this is the children's workplace, and allowing for independence upon arrival empowers the child, and sets up the day for success. Some families find that having a special goodbye song or other routine is helpful in the transition into the classroom.

Discipline

It is our goal to guide toddlers to become respectful, considerate members of our community. Courtesy and kindness are modeled by adults, and encouraged in all interactions so that toddlers will develop self-discipline. The "rules" of the Toddler environment include respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment. Discipline is regarded as a means of promoting appropriate behavior and discouraging inappropriate behavior. Positive disciplinary techniques are used to maintain the respectful environment, and redirect behavior in a way that nurtures self esteem and problem solving skills. Some examples of these techniques would be:

- Utilizing natural consequences
- Acknowledging the child's feelings, and offering language to help them to express these feelings
- Helping the child to see alternative means in conflict resolution (Using words, walking away, seeking out a teacher for assistance)
- Phrasing redirection in positive terms ("Please walk", rather than "No running")
- Praising behavioral achievements
- Gentle reminders of the classroom guidelines

More individualized strategies may be utilized in the event of hurtful behavior or chronic behavioral issues, and we maintain close communication with families at all times should these concerns arise.

Our Toddler Community

For many families, beginning your child's education in the Toddler Program at MLC will be your child's first experience in a community outside of the home. With this in mind, please feel free to communicate any questions or concerns with the Teaching Team. We encourage an open dialogue during these important years of development, and value parent's ideas and contributions as we work together to create the best early childhood experience for your child. Looking forward to a fantastic school year!

Toddler Necessities

These items need to be on hand at school daily.

- Water bottle each day labeled with name and date
- 2 labeled tote-like bags, one for returning home daily and the other for weekly nap items.
- 2 packages/boxes of baby wipes
- 1 package of diapers you currently use labeled with your child's name. We will let you know when supplies run low.
- Nap items; a blanket, a crib sheet and security item if needed. These will be sent home weekly to for a fresh set. *(These will be kept in the 2nd cubby bag)*
- 3 sets of seasonal clothes placed in his or her cubby basket (shirt, shorts/pants, undies, sock etc.)
- Inside shoes (slippers or cros) Children will take off their shoes upon entering the classroom. This cuts down on dirt, germs and illness.
- Please send your child in clothes that can get dirty and in a sturdy pair of shoes (no cros or flip flops please)